THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) After the liberalisation of Steel Sector, Production of Steel is determined by the interplay of market forces. The Steel Companies in the Private and Public Sector regulate their production as per market demand.

**Repair of coke oven batteries by VSP**

3009. DR. BIPLAB DAS GUPTA: will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Visakhapatnam Steel Plant had to incur an avoidable expenditure of Rs. 102 crores towards repair of coke oven batteries;

(b) whether it is a fact that the batteries which were commissioned in 1989, 1991 and 1992 had a guaranteed life of 15 to 17 years;

(c) if so, the reasons for incurring the avoidable expenditure; and

(d) the action taken to recover the loss to the exchequer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) Visakhapatnam Steel Plant incurred an expenditure of Rs. 82.78 crores towards repair of coke oven batteries.

(b) Yes, Sir. The coke oven batteries in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant were commissioned in 1989, 1991 and 1992. coke oven batteries of 7 metres height in steel plants have a normal life of 15—17 years. The three 7 metres high coke oven batteries of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant had no specific guarantee from the designers for a life of 15—17 years.

(c) and (d) The matter of premature break down of these coke oven batteries in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant was referred to CBI in April, 2001, which registered a preliminary inquiry. This inquiry is at an initial stage. The Government will take further appropriate action after completion of the inquiry.

**Wage Board for the employees of SAIL**

3010. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have set up a Wage Board for the SAIL employees;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how it would benefit the employees due to retire in the year 2002?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

**Revision of wage structure of SAIL Employees**

3011. SHRI B. J. PANDA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether an agreement was reached recently by the National Joint Committee for Steel Industry revising the wage structure of SAIL employees;

(b) if so, the maximum and minimum rise of wage of an employee;

(c) the minimum wage assured;

(d) how much the rise will cost to the exchequer;

(e) the period of agreement that will be binding on the parties;

(f) by when this agreement will be effective; and

(g) when was the last agreement signed and when it expired?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The minimum and maximum rise in wages to the employees would consist of 20% of basic pay as on 31.12.96 notionally w.e.f. 1.1.97, an amount equal to two increments in the revised scales of pay w.e.f. 1.4.2001 and another amount equal to one increment in the revised scales of pay w.e.f. 1.4.2002.

(c) The minimum assured wage as on 1.1.1997 is Rs. 4,000/- p.m.

(d) The financial implication of the wage revision to SAIL would be Rs. 33 crore (approximately) p.m. w.e.f. 1.1.2001.

(e) and (f) The agreement will be effective from 1.1.97 for ten years; and

(g) The last NJCS agreement was signed on 18.5.1995 effective from 1.1.1992, which expired on 31.12.1996.